A SKETCH OF THEOSOPHY

by

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THEOSOPHY

Theosophy is the Divine Wisdom—the wisdom that has been given men in direct and plain terms about man, God, nature and their relations to each other. Not all of the knowledge has been given; much is left for us to learn in future. For thousands, indeed millions of years portions of the teachings have been given out and, though much has been lost and later more or less completely recovered or given to men again, we have to-day, through recent studies and revelations, a very complete scheme of the whole.

THE EVOLUTION OF LIFE

Theosophy teaches not only the evolution of bodies for plants, animals, man and other beings, but also the evolution of consciousness, of the soul. Man had his origin in the divine and to the divine he will return.

THE ANCIENT MYSTERIES

The mysteries of the ancients were more or less incomplete accounts of the theosophic scheme of knowledge, often given in symbols and ceremonies that might not be comprehended at the time but that could later be remembered and studied.

FREEMASONRY

The present day Masonry is the continuation of the old mysteries and theosophists respect and love Masonry because of the great purity with which its teachings are presented in symbols and ritual.

RELIGIONS

The reason why religions do not teach plainly and fully what theosophy tells us is because they were given out directly, one by one, through holy men, to present to the people of different times such parts of the great plan as suited the world of the day. While so far as their teaching extended they gave clear explanations to their votaries they could not give complete details to the people at large because they were not able to understand, as are our better educated populations to-day. Besides, man's evolution had not proceeded far enough to make it wise for the teachers to reveal so much. But in every religion is some part of the divine wisdom so given that the worshiper can derive from it inspiration and encouragement and can gain important associations with the higher worlds. Hence theosophists study the inner meaning of all religions and encourage their devotees to uncover their half-hidden revelations.

THE PLANES

In order to understand theosophy easily it is best to know at the very outset that the world consists not only of those objects which we can learn about directly through the senses—touch, taste, smell and so forth, but of those realms in which exist feelings and thoughts and highest ideals as actualities outside ourselves. When nature is seen from the point of view of occult observation it is found that all parts of physical nature shade into one another without violence from the lowest and densest physical matter to the most delicate and for us imperceptible ethers. This matter is only an expression of one phase of the Creator's consciousness while another phase called *life* in the more restricted sense, plays through it. Physical matter shades off into the vapors, the gases and the ethers. The realms above the physical possess matter in a slate like that of the ether which is said to be the light-bearing agency. The ethers are of various degrees of gross and minor finenesses. The greater divisions or departments of these realms are called

planes, although they are rather great realms of life and consciousness than mere levels.

THE PHYSICAL PLANE

We live in the midst of the physical plane, except in sleep and after so-called death. Each of the seven planes has seven divisions or sub-planes. The physical body of flesh and bone is the vehicle or instrument through which we usually recognize the objects and events of every-day life.

THE ASTRAL PLANE

In sleep the connection between the physical and astral bodies is so loosened that the man may float about his physical body almost unconscious or if he is somewhat more highly evolved or especially trained in this respect he may leave his physical body and go to as great a distance as he wishes, remaining in contact with his body by a delicate thread. Those who are the helpers and servants of the Masters of the Divine Wisdom have the privilege of going out of their bodies in this manner on a great variety of errands of mercy. The astral body is that vehicle which is usually used to learn the facts of the astral plane. It is so constructed and attuned that it is in harmony with the vibrations of that level. At the same time it can be used to learn much in regard to the things of the physical plane. That which is learned of the mental plane by its means is not very reliable because it does not immediately belong to that plane. Besides there is a general law that the facts pertaining to any plane or sub-plane are best learned by using a vehicle belonging to the plane next above it.

THE MENTAL PLANE

The things of the mind world are actualities. The product of mind-action is concrete, definite and objective. Man has a vehicle or body made partly of mental plane ether with which to work in the world or plane of mind. When a man thinks

of an object he makes a small image of it and this image can be seen as a thing apart from him if he has the feeling that it is in any way connected with things or beings outside himself. The immense realm of the mind, the mental plane, is divided into two parts, a lower and a higher part, four sub-planes belonging to the former and three to the latter part. The most striking difference between these two lies in the fact that in the higher realm are no forms such as we have mentioned though there is something corresponding to them.

HIGHER PLANES

Above the mental plane are four others still higher, the buddhic, the nirvanic, the paranirvanic and the maha-para-nirvanic. The first of these is the realm of pure reason, of perfect sympathy, of deepest, holiest feeling and of bliss. Nirvana is no realm of negation but of a consciousness and life above all our imagining for the realization of God's purpose and design.

AFTER DEATH

When men speak of death theosophists think of a putting off of the physical body because they know that he who was said to have died in reality still lives in the astral body and with that body he is in contact with the astral world and knows and can speak with the beings who live in it. For years, as a rule, he lives there a life of great activity—for he can go almost instantaneously from one point to another in it—of extreme usefulness if he wishes, because he can easily find and aid those human beings who are in distress or who are ignorant and need his instruction about the conditions of their life.

THE HEAVEN LIFE

When a man's store of spiritual force pertaining to the astral plane has been exhausted he passes on in consciousness to the mental plane, where he lives the life which is known as the heaven life. He passes through all the sub-planes of this plane as far as the forces accumulated in the life of the

physical plane will carry him. At the same time he has with him in this heaven-life all those whom he has known and loved in the life of the physical plane, so his life is one full of happiness. No desire or aspiration is denied complete satisfaction.

REINCARNATION

When this life is over the man returns to earth-life again by taking as his body that of a child of people to whom he has been related in former lives; in other words he becomes "their child." For a short time before his return he reviews his old life and seeing it in its just relations to other lives and to the great plan of his evolution, he is satisfied that what shall come to pass for him will be in all ways best.

THE SOUL'S RETURN

The soul's life on earth is not the expression of the whole but only of a part of the ego, as we name the higher part of man, the nobler, inner and almost divine part of him. That portion which expresses itself is only such a phase of his nature as his deserts, his Karma, the outer conditions and the Great Design permit of expression. What a glorious thought that far more than our friends can show us of themselves they are! So that they may at any moment display unexpectedly the signs of greatness in one or another of the aspects or qualities of deity.

SOUL DEVELOPMENT

Soul development results from the expansion of these divine qualities in men. They are to be taken up, studied, cultivated, and as it were, exercised by the student of the Divine Wisdom until he is lost in the joy of that work, which is the work of transforming himself by systematic training into the likeness of the Father. Some books throw floods of light on this subject and give such aid as each earnest seeker feels is meant especially for him.

THE ESSENCE OF THEOSOPHY

The essence of theosophy lies for each of us struggling creatures in its divine promise that we shall, each of us, develop until we are like the Creator in power, in love, in wisdom and that we may undertake and carry out consciously this development if we aspire to do so out of love for the Elder Brothers and for the work which they are doing in guiding and teaching men.

THE MASTERS

The Elder Brothers are They Who already have gone through this process of growth, have already conquered Their own natures as far as they pertain to the planes below the level of Nirvana. Though entitled, if They wished to accept them, to enter the joys of that highest state of bliss yet They do not do so because They love too dearly all other human beings who They feel are Themselves in other form. Humanity, without the aid which They can give would evolve, would reach its goal, but only with infinitely greater suffering and delay. They are the Christs of the race—for there have been many Christs —Who have sacrificed Their own bliss for us; They are indeed the Redeemers of men. Their office it has been, among many offices, to send out from Their Lodge many of Their members who have not only founded the religions of the world and worked in them but have often acted as the rulers, the kings of humanity and have guided in a thousand hidden ways.

THE HELPERS

Among the ways in which Their youngest pupils serve is by becoming very active during the period of sleep. Taught to leave the body when it is ready for its rest they are given duties in the astral world such as enable them to be of great aid to humanity and at the same time to have the joy of taking part in Their service. There are those to be instructed who have just entered the astral world by so-called death, who had not had the privilege of knowing before that time of the possibilities of life when freed from the physical body. There are

many to be aided in the midst of the difficulties of the physical life and there are many to be taught the truths of Theosophy.

METEMPSYCHOSIS

Metempsychosis should not be confused with reincarnation. The latter means that men leave at death the physical bodies which they have been using and withdraw to live free of bodies for a period, again at some future day having opportunities to find as before a partial expression of their natures through physical bodies. Metempsychosis was the doctrine of the ancients, Greek and oriental, that after death the soul leaving the body passes as an entirety into another body, whether that of a child or an animal depending upon the conduct of the individual while living in the recently abandoned body. Reincarnation provides for the expansion of the divine nature of man, while the doctrine of metempsychosis is evidently erroneous because it does not fully recognize the evolution of the soul of man.

THE GREAT WHITE LODGE

The Great White Lodge is that part of the hierarchy which is composed of men still embodied. They are They who are the saviors of mankind, its teachers and leaders. The youngest members are the recruits who join the band of outer helpers. It is only after long and patient service that the pupil is found prepared to become an initiate into the mysteries of the Lodge and its secrets which shall enable him to perform so-called miracles, which are those works which can only be done with a knowledge of the secrets of nature not yet in the hands of men at large and with the powers of the soul and its vehicles which come from development and from the associated power and authority of the Master.

KARMA

The law which is most strongly associated by theosophists with that of reincarnation is the related one of karma. This idea is the working out to its

various conclusions of the fact that the law of action and re-action belongs to spiritual levels as well as to the physical plane and operates there as well as in the life we ordinarily know, the life of the physical world. If man lives many times in different bodies and under varying conditions in order that he may learn many lessons and finally become proficient in the use of all the forces of nature, he is accountable for the use of the great forces which he has used in the course of his many "days in school." The good and evil deeds which a man performs, minor as well as major, produce their effects in higher nature, so that a man actually reaps as he has sown. This accounts for the fact that some men are working under great difficulties or in suffering while others are having happy and easy lives. The law of adjustment operates without fail.

OUR HOPE

The hope of theosophists lies in the fact that the life of the entire globe is improving with each passing cycle, that man is learning his lessons with great rapidity and that we may take part in the quickening of man's evolution with results for the benefit of our fellows beyond the power of computation, for the reason that if we rise above our lesser selves we may find in the blessings of the Great Perfected Men who have gone before, powers in which to do our work out of all proportion to our own unaided efforts.

PAIN, GRIEF

One of the teachings of the Lord Gautama Buddha was that of the mode whereby man might cease from sorrowing. He shows that by learning the laws of life the forces in which we are living may be directed, at first feebly and afterwards with greater power to the helping of others, with the result that we ourselves, our friends and all humanity in turn may benefit in the diminution of sorrow and of pain.

THEOSOPHY AND LIFE

The study of the application of The Law to life is one of the great works of theosophists and in that study we find the most immediate benefit of theosophic teaching. To the theosophist life cannot look the same as to the man who does not view it from the higher evolutional standpoint.

THE MYSTERIES OF LIFE

The mysteries of life are disclosed by the application of the laws of karma and reincarnation to spiritual evolution, with the result that a poise and peace are attained which nothing can overthrow.

THE INVITATION

Theosophists do not press their views upon others but gladly invite all to share the knowledge which they have found of such great benefit. Information about Theosophy in its details, may be obtained by addressing the officers of any of our lodges or by writing to the General Secretary of the American Section, Theosophical Society, 103 State Street, Chicago, Ill.

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For free literature about Theosophy, address the General Secretary of the Theosophical Society, 31 N State St., Chicago, Ill., U. S. A.